

# Adult Literacy Contact Centre NEWSLETTER



April 1995

Volume 8, Number 4

A project of the Adult Basic Education Association of B.C.

## Report Looks at How Ministries Fund ABE

A report that analyzes the funding of ABE programs in B.C. school districts and community colleges concludes the two systems fund ABE at generally comparable levels.

The *Adult Basic Education Funding Review* was conducted by Coopers & Lybrand Consulting in the fall of 1994 for the Joint Committee of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour. The Joint Committee acts as a forum for the two ministries to work together in improving the quality and accessibility of ABE.

The funding review was initiated to "address apparent inequities and inconsistencies in the funding of ABE programs, and the charges levied to students for tuition and other services, by each ministry." One of the issues that triggered the review was a report by Dr. Ron Faris in 1992, *Lifelong Learning for the 21st Century*, which pointed to inequitable funding systems between the two ministries.

The current report analyzes: how each ministry defines ABE; the types of ABE services funded by each ministry and how they fund them; the "marginal" funding provided for each additional

ABE student in both systems; and the student services provided in both systems.

The report concludes that "each system offers a similar set of services and most of them are funded at comparable levels."

Two significant disparities are discussed in the report. Unlike the college system, school district funding is not capped until after actual demand is determined. The report states that "The 'demand driven' approach to funding in the Ministry of Education system provides a significant advantage to school districts over colleges in their ability to react to and satisfy unmet demand for ABE services as space and resources permit."

The report also states that, because school districts do not generally charge fees for any of the services they provide while colleges typically charge fees for tuition and books, "The charges for tuition and books in the college system are two of the most significant factors contributing to the perception of inequity and lack of consistency between the funding systems."

In light of these disparities, the report recommends that:

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- ❖ consideration should be given to implementing a demand driven approach to funding ABE in colleges

- ❖ a consistent approach to charging tuition fees should be adopted by the ministries

The report also recommends that:

- ❖ each ministry refine its definition of ABE to make it clearer and more comparable, and introduce new terminology to clearly differentiate the two systems where they are not directly comparable.

The Joint Committee is reviewing the report's conclusions and will soon present its recommendations to the Minister of Education and the Minister of Skills, Training and Labour.

For more information on the work of the Committee, contact:

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## B.C. Has New ABE Coordinator

The Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour (MSTL) has appointed a new Adult Basic Education Coordinator.

David Griffiths began work as Coordinator on February 1, 1995 in a two-year secondment position.

The role of the Coordinator is to coordinate the development, delivery and evaluation of the ABE program on behalf of the Ministry. The Coordinator is also a member of the Joint Committee of the Ministry of Education and MSTL. The Committee is looking at important issues between the two ministries such as funding, quality of programs, articulation, and a common credential.

Griffiths has over ten years experience as an ABE instructor in Alberta and B.C. and holds a Master of Education in Curriculum Development from the University of Oregon.

Since 1990 Griffiths has been senior instructor at Northern Lights College in Fort St. John where he taught math, physics, and chemistry. He was also President of the Fort St. John Literacy Society from 1992 to 1995.

In his role as ABE Coordinator Griffiths will be active in

MSTL's Applied Academic Initiative. The purpose of the initiative, says Griffiths, is to bring "a more hands-on approach to education so students can acquire the skills they need to be employable and to be successful in technical, vocational, and university programs."

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The Adult Literacy Contact Centre is a project of the Adult Basic Education Association of B.C. and is jointly funded by the Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour, and the National Literacy Secretariat.

The Centre welcomes receiving your literacy news by phone, fax or mail. We reserve the right to edit written submissions for the newsletter.

The newsletter is published bi-monthly (except as noted). It is available free of charge to any individual or agency upon request.



# From Alaska to Tierra del Fuego

An adult literacy educator from B.C. recently motorcycled 34,000 kilometres over three continents and studied popular education strategies along the way.

Alan Creighton-Kelly's seven month trip on a BMW motorcycle from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, an island at the tip of South America, was the fulfillment of a personal dream. It was also an opportunity to research strategies for teaching and learning in Latin American cultures.

Creighton-Kelly has worked in the adult education field since 1975. He has been an instructor at several community colleges and other institutions in B.C. Recently, his work has involved assisting groups to plan, initiate, and evaluate literacy and other community-based programs.

The objectives of the research, says Creighton-Kelly, were to "understand the strategies people use to communicate information when they don't read and write. I wanted to see how learners work with learners - how they transmit information and engage one another." He hopes to apply this knowledge to literacy education in Canada: "If

teachers can learn from how learners work with each other in non-formal, intuitive ways, they'll be better teachers."

To conduct the research, Creighton-Kelly spent time as a participant-observer with popular education organizations in Nicaragua and Chile. In Nicaragua, he worked with Pekin Guerrero, an agricultural cooperative near the city of Masaya. The cooperative communicates important information to farmers about pesticides and irrigation techniques for example, through drawings and acting the information out in a form of theatre.

In Chile, Creighton-Kelly worked with Suri Saday, a women's health collective that conveys information about AIDS and other health issues to the residents of El Bosque, a very poor Santiago neighbourhood. One of the ways the collective communicates with the people is to paint murals. "It's an extraordinary way to express themselves," says Creighton-Kelly, "and it dispels the notion that literacy is only reading and writing."

Creighton-Kelly will share the results of his research at a workshop at the Adult Basic Education Association of B.C. annual conference in Prince George in May. □

## Researchers, Take Note

An international competition for an award in adult literacy research has been announced.

The award is "to promote original research in adult literacy in the different regions of the world." It is co-sponsored by the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources Development Canada, and the Unesco (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Institute for Education (UIE).

The award-winning research will be published by UIE. The author will receive \$10,000 U.S. when the award is announced in June 1996.

Possible fields of research can include: methodology; training; policy; evaluation; schools; and the economic or cultural dimensions of literacy.

Original, unpublished manuscripts must be submitted to UIE before November 31, 1995. Researchers may apply to UIE for a grant of \$1,000 U.S. to complete their project.

For further information, contact:

National Literacy Secretariat  
Human Resources  
Development Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 1K5

Phone: (819) 953-5569  
Fax: (819) 953-8076

# UPCOMING CONFERENCES

The "Depth and Diversity" of adult education will be explored at the 1995 conference and annual general meeting of the **Adult Basic Education Association of B.C.** to be held in Prince George, May 10-13, 1995.

Participants will be able to explore in depth a particular aspect of adult education by attending a full slate of workshops in one of five topic streams, or to sample a diversity of topics within the field by attending workshops in different streams.

The conference is hosted by the College of New Caledonia, the Native Friendship Centre, Open Learning Agency, School District #57 (Prince George), and the Elizabeth Fry Society.

The five topic streams are: technology, science, communication, aboriginal, and employment.

Among the 30 workshops offered are:

- ❖ Ecodiversity - "A case for environmental literacy across the curriculum."
- ❖ The coming of the Freenets - "How this service can be accessed and how the information can be used."
- ❖ Writing to be read - "Publication as a stimulant to ABE writing skills."

- ❖ Employment and Literacy - "Teaching literacy skills necessary to be employable - a private trainer's perspective."

There will be four workshops offered in the aboriginal stream on topics such as: employment equity, alternative learning, holistic service, talking circles, and culture and life, among others.

The keynote speakers at the conference are Gerry Wouters, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour, Victoria, and Richard Darville, Department of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, Carleton University, Ottawa. Wouters and Darville will participate in a keynote panel discussion on recent trends in adult education in B.C. and Canada and the implications of these trends for policy makers, instructors, and students.

For further information, contact in Prince George:

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Fax: 561-3757  
Email: ad028@freenet.unbc.edu  
or:

Paula Davies  
Phone: 561-5835  
Fax: 561-5816

The **Canadian Association for Community Education** is holding its 1995 annual conference in Vancouver, May 4-6, 1995.

"Touching the Roots of the Community" will feature interactive skills development workshops on topics such as managing change, conflict resolution, evaluation, and goal setting.

The conference will include a workshop on "literacy and community" featuring a family literacy program at the Macdonald School in Vancouver "where literacy is an organizing strand underlying community development and educational activities across generations."

Participants will also have the opportunity to see community programs in action through field visits to a number of Lower Mainland communities, including a First Nations community, and an inner city community, among others.

For further information, contact any of the following:

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# NEW RESOURCES

## ***Learning to Learn: Impacts of the Adult Basic Education Experience on the Lives of Participants***

*Just getting into that course and starting to learn and challenging myself really opened up a whole new world for me. I started learning. I'm continually learning. I love learning.*

*Thinking good has come about because of the upgrading. Because you just don't jump in anger because now you know a little more. It's a great feeling.*

*I actually feel that I am part of the driving force now, whereas before I kind of felt that I was a burden on society.*

These are the words of former ABE students who were interviewed for the qualitative research study described in this report. The purpose of the study was to examine the long-term impact of ABE on students' lives.

The study was funded by the 1992/93 B.C. literacy cost-shared program and sponsored by the Adult Basic Education Association of B.C. and Northwest Community College.

The research methodology

included personal interviews in three regions of B.C. with 44 former students who had been away from their last ABE course for at least one year. The students were diverse in age, ethnic origin, and gender and had attended a college, school district, or community-based literacy or ABE program for at least three months. The students volunteered to participate in the study and came forward as a result of local advertising and contacts made by the researchers with instructors and tutors.

Over 90% of participants in the study reported positive impacts from their ABE experience. The study was designed to determine the "essence" of the positive impacts of ABE by uncovering patterns and similarities in the students' stories. The study found that the essence of a positive ABE experience is one that expands the possibilities for informed choice and action in life: "People are learning to learn...even more importantly, people have learned that they have learned."

The report concludes with a discussion of the implications of the study's findings for planning and delivering ABE/literacy resources. One of these implications is the economic benefit to society of ABE in facilitating healthier personal and family lifestyles and greater and more informed participation in social relationships of all kinds.

Copies of the report are available from the Adult Literacy Contact Centre while supplies last.

## ***Learning (Apart), (Growing) Together: Family Literacy in Action***

This is a report of a family literacy program designed to provide safe, quality care for children and an alternative approach to learning for their mothers.

The program was funded by the 1992/93 B.C. literacy cost-shared program and sponsored by Capilano College and the North Shore Neighbourhood House (NSNH).

Participants in the program were young, single mothers on income assistance. The program's goal was to give the mothers a positive learning experience that supported them in advocating for themselves and their children with the education, health care and social service systems.

The program took place three days a week from October 1993 to June 1994 at the NSNH. While the children attended an enriched pre-school program, their mothers participated in a support group and in English upgrading sessions. The skills of the majority of the women were sufficiently advanced that they

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hoped to achieve grade 12 equivalency through the program.

The report is intended to contribute ideas about creating programs that work with learners in a participatory way. The curriculum was developed collaboratively between the participants and the facilitators and was based on issues the women encounter in their daily lives. Theme units, on abuse for example, were used as the content for the development of language learning and specific writing skills.

The report discusses how this program fits into the context of family literacy. The mothers preferred to spend their time in the program apart from their children and to focus on their own learning and on other issues in their lives: "In our context, family literacy did not mean mothers and children learning together...In fact, it was the time spent learning separately that strengthened their relationships...Poor families, especially single parent families, are in situations where spending time with their children may not be the priority for the time available for learning."

A copy of the report is available on loan from the Adult Literacy Contact Centre.

## ***In this country...Personal stories about Northern B.C.***

This collection of 86 short personal stories about life in northern B.C. is intended as a teaching resource for adult educators. All of the stories were written by literacy or adult basic education students.

The collection was funded by the 1993/94 B.C. literacy cost-shared program and sponsored by the College of New Caledonia and the District Outreach Society in Burns Lake.

The stories are grouped into themes such as childhood, humour, the bush, and winter.

On the theme of winter, Ana Maria Vaquerano, who immigrated to Canada from El Salvador, writes of her first experience with snow in the story, *Snow, clean and pure*:

*Oh! Believe! In the moment that I saw the shiny white snow on my hands for the first time in my life, I wished I had been born in this country!*

Copies are available to adult educators free of charge from:

Bill Graham  
Northern Literacy Readers  
Box 5000  
Burns Lake, B.C.  
V0J 1E0

Phone: 692-3175  
Fax: 692-3809

## ***Vancouver Public Library Literacy Evaluation Project***

This is a report of a systematic evaluation of the literacy activities of Vancouver Public Library (VPL) to determine if the library is meeting the needs and expectations of the literacy community. The report is also intended to serve as a model for evaluation of the literacy services provided by other libraries in Canada.

The project was funded by the 1992/93 B.C. literacy cost-shared program and sponsored by VPL and Vancouver Community College.

The 178-page report documents in detail the evaluation process. Among other methods, the evaluation included focus groups of learners, tutors, library staff, and community literacy providers.

The focus groups led the project team to the conclusion that the library is "not providing satisfactory service to learners." For example, the focus groups expressed concerns that learners who come into the library find the arrangement of and access to the materials very difficult; and that most learners feel uncomfortable in the library, are reluctant to come to it, and feel that they don't belong.

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The report addresses these and other concerns of the focus groups with a series of eight recommendations about how to improve library service to learners. Among the recommendations are:

- ❖ That more personalized one to-one assistance be available to learners
- ❖ That the library regularly use the direct input of learners when planning services intended for them

The report also contains recommendations on issues such as collection development, access to materials, and staff awareness, among others.

Copies of the report are available from the Adult Literacy Contact Centre.

## ***B.C. Books for Literacy***

This pamphlet describes twenty books from B.C. publishers for adult new readers and literacy providers.

Production of the pamphlet was funded by the 1994/95 B.C. literacy cost-shared program and sponsored by the Association of Book Publishers of B.C. and the Literacy Materials Committee. Members of the Committee chose the books, which can be purchased at B.C. bookstores.

The books are each assigned a reading level and are grouped into themes such as poetry and stories; nature; First Nations; and women's voices.

Copies of the pamphlet are available from the Adult Literacy Contact Centre.

## ***Ensuring Equal Access: A Regional Literacy Development Plan***

This report presents a plan to develop literacy in northwestern B.C. over the next five years.

The report is the product of a 1993/94 B.C. literacy cost-shared project sponsored by Houston Link to Learning and Northwest Community College. A regional literacy coordinator was hired as part of the project to develop the plan.

The broad purpose of the development plan is to ensure equal access to literacy education and resources across a vast geographical area. The report outlines short and long-term action plans for specific literacy issues within the region. These include funding and instructional issues and the need to share information and resources across the region.

Copies of the report are available from the Adult Literacy Contact Centre. □

## **Countdown to "Operation Bookworm"**

Thousands of books from the Vancouver Public Library (VPL) will be carried by the public in a parade on May 21, 1995 to mark the opening of a new library for Vancouver.

"Operation Bookworm" kicks off a week of festivities to celebrate the opening of Library Square, the new site of VPL's central branch. Volunteers from the public will transport books from the library's current location to their new home.

If you want to be part of "Operation Bookworm," contact:

Betsy Waterbury  
Volunteer Coordinator  
VPL Opening Events  
675 West Hastings Street  
11th Floor  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V6B 1N2

Phone: 257-3509  
Fax: 669-5062

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## Wanted: Learners' Artwork

Learners are invited to submit their designs for the cover of this year's *Learners Talking to Learners* publication.

*Learners Talking to Learners* is the B.C. literacy cost-shared project which enables literacy learner groups to plan and host their own events. The events, says Project Coordinator Joyce Cameron, give learners an opportunity "to talk about issues they think are important and experiences that they have in common."

This is the eighth year learner events have been held in B.C. This year the project is sponsored by Selkirk College and a Provincial Events Advisory Committee.

A total of 36 events have been funded this year.

Some examples of events planned are a cultural fair, writing a cookbook and sampling its recipes at a potluck dinner, filming a video documentary, field trips, and speakouts.

A compendium of learner-written reports describing the events is published each year under the title *Learners Talking to Learners*. Last year's edition featured a new cover design by Janet Rankin, an ABE student at East Kootenay Community College in Cranbrook. This year, literacy practitioners are again asked to invite their students to submit designs for a new cover of the booklet.

Designs should:

- ❖ be in black and white
- ❖ measure either 8 1/2 x 11" (front cover design only) or 11" x 17" (front and back cover design)
- ❖ include the words, "Learners Talking to Learners 1995"

The deadline for submissions is June 15, 1995. The student's name and a day and evening phone number should be included. Please mail artwork to the address below.

For further information, contact:

Joyce Cameron  
Learners Talking to Learners  
c/o 707 - 12th Street  
New Westminster, B.C.  
V3M 4J7

Phone: 439-7714 ☐

## Thank You, Newsletter Readers!

This is the final edition of the *Adult Literacy Contact Centre Newsletter*. As we reported in February, the Adult Literacy Contact Centre is merging with Literacy B.C. to form a new provincial literacy organization. The merger will take effect in May 1995.

This newsletter contains an insert describing the services to be provided by the new organization. These services will include publication of a bi-monthly newsletter for members of Literacy B.C. If you would like to become a Literacy B.C. member and receive the newsletter, please

complete the membership form on the insert.

Thank you, readers, for your enthusiastic support of the ALCC newsletter during the past five years. As part of the new organization, we look forward to continuing to keep you informed about literacy in this province.